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THE LIFE OF MAN ON EARTH.

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A

# DISCOURSE

DELIVERED TO THE

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AND SOCIETY

IN WEST WOODSTOCK, CONN., MAY, 1851,

ON THE OCCASION OF THE

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ORDINATION OF  
THE AUTHOR AS THEIR PASTOR;

TO WHOM HE ADMINISTERED IN THAT CAPACITY NEARLY THIRTY-  
TWO YEARS, AND OCCASIONALLY SINCE.

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BY ALVAN UNDERWOOD, A. M.

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BOSTON :  
PRINTED BY GEORGE C. RAND & Co.  
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### PSALM XC. 10.

THE DAYS OF OUR YEARS ARE THREE-SCORE YEARS AND TEN ;  
AND IF BY REASON OF STRENGTH THEY BE FOUR-SCORE YEARS,  
YET IS THEIR STRENGTH LABOR AND SORROW : FOR IT IS SOON  
CUT OFF, AND WE FLY AWAY.

MOSES, it appears, composed this instructive and affecting psalm. He possessed great powers of mind, which were highly cultivated, and he was designated to perform a distinguished part on the drama of human life, in accomplishing the purposes of Divine Providence. When God has some special work to be effected by the instrumentality of men, he raises up suitable characters, which he employs as agents in executing his purposes. Thus was Moses brought into existence, preserved by a special interposition of Providence, and fitted to accomplish a memorable work in his day, as an illustrious deliverer, legislator, and leader of the people of Israel from Egypt to the borders of Canaan, attended with various signal events both of mercies and trials for the space of forty years. Perhaps no mere man on earth, since the fall, was favored with such near approach to God, and familiar intercourse with Him, as Moses. As God came down on Mount Sinai, with awful display, Moses was admitted into his presence on its top, and received the tables of the moral law, and appropriate instructions for the people. And not unfrequently did God appear to him by a cloud, or some visible token ; and it is recorded the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. His writings contain “ the foundation of all the true knowledge of God and

man that has ever been in the world ;” and they are, of consequence, more to be appreciated than all the uninspired volumes that have been written.

While taking the proper humble attitude of devotion at the footstool of Jehovah, he justly acknowledges, in very pathetic language, the mournful condition of the human family, by reason of all having sinned, and come short of the glory of God, and experiencing in consequence the effects of his holy displeasure. They are frail, destined to return to the dust whence they were taken, liable to decay and fade away as transiently as the tender grass and flowers of the field, or to be borne on rapidly in crowds, as a flooded stream, to the ocean of eternity. Yet, the gloom of this dark picture is enlivened with mercy’s beams, flowing from the Sun of Righteousness, the second Adam, who is made a quickening Spirit. The very idea of Moses raising the voice of supplication to God, supposes the rays of mercy, of hope and consolation, had penetrated the dark cloud ; for otherwise unmingled darkness and despair must have continued to rest upon the world. It becomes, then, deeply interesting to us all to survey the subject.

I. There is a limit affixed to the present existence of our race. This is involved in the phrase “the days of our years,” as also in the uniform language of Scripture. Man, as originally formed in the intellectual and moral image of his Creator, was constituted to continue undecaying, undying, immortal. The penalty of death, annexed to transgression, supposes the boon of life immortal, in unmixed bliss, was insured to him in case of persevering obedience. If he were not, then, in a *state* suited to an endless perpetuation and advancement of his innumerable posterity in knowledge, holiness, communion with God and his holy kingdom, it is probable all would have been *changed*, after a certain period, into a more spiritual, celestial state, as respects their *material* part, similar to the change Enoch and Elijah underwent when translated, and which will pass upon all the redeemed at the general resurrection. But the bright prospect of man’s primitive innocence became clouded at once by the first act of disobedience, and the irreversible sentence followed, “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” Hence we read, “It is appointed unto men once to die.” And “there is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit ; neither hath he power in the day of death ; and there is no discharge in that war.”

II. The life of man is short. It was, indeed, in the first ages, prolonged to nearly a thousand years. But even that period, so much larger than is now allotted to the inhabitants of earth, unquestionably appeared to those who then lived very short, especially when it terminated, and they viewed it in the comparison with eternity, or what would have been their life if they had not sinned. Moses says in this psalm, in allusion to the first sin of man, and his doomed condition in the world as immediately following :—"Thou turnest man to destruction, and sayest, return, ye children of men. For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday, when it is past, and as a watch in the night." It is not strange that in the sight of the eternal God who inhabits eternity, with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day, this long period of man's life was but as yesterday, and was gone as quickly as a watch in the night, which fled away the few moments men were slumbering. It is supposed by some, that "Moses here also expresses the sentiments which, in that early period, mankind would naturally entertain of human frailty. A life of a thousand years seems long to us who seldom hear of one that lives a tenth part of that time ; but to those, among whom death had but recently obtained dominion, and who, after six or seven generations had come on the stage, began to see their aged people dropping into the dust, a thousand years were but as yesterday when it is past."

One way in which the depravity of man shows itself, and is evinced to be very deep-rooted and controlling over them, is, when their lives are prolonged and population is multiplied, it will invariably be followed with an increase of wickedness ; unless God is pleased in mercy specially to interpose by providence or grace, to present a barrier to the indulgence of their sinful hearts. Thus it was in the first ages of the world. The corruptions of the heart burst out into such overflowings of ungodliness that the earth is said to have been filled with violence ; and God saw fit, in righteous judgment, to bear awful testimony against the dreadful wickedness of men, and to what it deserved, by overwhelming the world in one common destruction by a deluge ; designing to leave hereby a standing memorial that "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth," utterly incurable by external means.

But one effect of sin, that of his body being turned to dust, began from this time to be more affectingly manifested. From

this solemn period human life became greatly reduced. In the second century from this, none reached 240. In the third none, except Terah, the father of Abraham, arrived to 200 years. Their longevity dwindled by degrees, until the Israelites were delivered from their bondage in Egypt, and were journeying to the promised land. Before experiencing many interruptions, or spending much time, they arrived near the borders of the happy country. But now they became involved in a most distressing catastrophe ; for all that generation of 20 years old and upwards, except Caleb and Joshua, for their unbelief, distrust, ingratitude, murmuring, and backwardness to go forward to possess the rich inheritance which God was ready so kindly to bestow upon them, were debarred ever possessing it, and had been immediately cut off had not Moses interceded for them ; but they were sentenced to 40 years' wanderings in the wilderness, from the time of their leaving Egypt, in which short space of time they should fall beneath the stroke of death.

It seems their lives, on an average, and the lives of after generations, and of the human family in general, were brought to about the same limit now assigned to them. The term mentioned in the text, "three-score years and ten," is not designed to fix the *exact known* limit of the life of any individual. It is a phrase expressive of a period which it is not unusual for men to live. Persons quite often arrive to it, or come near it, but seldom exceed it. Taking our stand, then, on this not very elevated point of time, and looking abroad over human existence, we see a numerous race rapidly pressing onward, like the waters of a great river, toward the ocean of eternity, and more than half reaching it before they have gone over one half, or one third even, of the narrow space comprised in the period "three-score years and ten." It appears from bills of mortality that in this healthful climate, one half of the human race die under 20 years of age, and, taking the world at large, under 17 ; among some portions even in infancy, or the flower of age ; and some have put it down as a fact, that of all that are born half die under seven years ; illustrating what the Scripture saith : "Man cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down ; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not." As we read the word of God, indeed, we find passages of a similar import repeatedly occurring, symbolically representing the very brief existence of man on earth ; to the end, no doubt, that he might be admonished to consider and improve the solemn and interesting truth. We repeat two or three as specimens :—



Isaiah says: "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field." "In the morning," says Moses in this psalm, "they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down and withered." Vegetation, as grass, for instance, in the east, springs up rapidly, and acquiring but little strength, decays as soon. How striking the emblem! Job exclaims, "Oh, remember that my life is wind!" And James: "What is your life? It is even as a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." "Behold," says David, "thou hast made my days as an hand-breadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee." One who travelled much in the East says, "It is still common there for persons to utter such expressions as, 'What are the days of man? only four fingers.' 'My son has gone, and has had a life of only four fingers.'"

There is another set of passages which seems designed to add to the force of these similitudes, impressive as they are, by including in them the idea of the rapidity of time. Thus Job says: "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle;" again, "My days are swifter than a post; they flee away; they see no good. They are hasted away as the swift ships; as the eagle that hasteth to the prey." Time is ever on the wing; it never intermits its flight: our moments slip away silently and insensibly; one period of life after another steals upon us till all are fled; and however long any portion of time, under any circumstances, may appear in prospect, when it is past, or our life closes, it will appear to us as a dream, or a watch in the night.

"The clock of time, how loud it strikes!  
 Its wheels, how swift they fly!  
 Its fingers, as they onward move,  
 Point to eternity."

III. The life of man is very uncertain. When he first sinned, that part of the penalty annexed to transgression, involving the return of his body to dust, began to take effect; he became mortal. And when, in process of time, the frailty and mortality of men became more manifested, by reason of their dying in every age and in great numbers, the observation of the pious Henry is strikingly true: "Men's life is a dying life." The expression in the text, "three-score years and ten, and if by reason of strength they be four-score years," implies uncertainty, and that God operates by means, usually prolonging life

in consequence of a vigorous constitution, healthful climate, temperate habits, and various second causes.

I can conceive of three things which render the lives of men very uncertain to themselves and one another. One is, since the apostacy the principles of disease and dissolution are implanted in the corporeal system, and in such a manner as cannot be foreseen in their operations. The connection between them and their effects cannot be discovered by the human intellect. So various are the attacks and the operation of diseases on different constitutions, that even physicians can make no certain calculations in regard to the continuance of life. The organization of the human body is like a harp of a thousand strings ; it is so delicate that a small obstruction of any part sensibly affects the whole. If we reflect but a moment on the curious construction of our bodies, their liability and exposure to injury, instead of wondering that we die, we shall be surprised that they are not sooner dissolved. If one part may be affected so as to undermine the whole system, it may occur to the healthy as well as to the sickly. The robust are as liable to be attacked with disease as the infirm ; and more often, it is believed, do they die suddenly.

It is a common saying, “The young *may* die ; the old *must*.” It is true the aged cannot expect to have their pilgrimage much longer protracted ; still, as respects the mass of the population, more die young than old. I knew a man, in the meridian of life, who remarked, in the presence of his very aged father, that he would want a coffin soon. The old gentleman, hearing the remark, very wisely said, “ My son, you may want one first ; ” and so it turned out. Nor is it, in substance, a very uncommon case. We have no data from which to draw a conclusion how long we shall live ; this is entirely uncertain.

Another thing which renders the lives of men very uncertain is the many extraneous objects with which they are liable to come in contact, that occasion their death. These lie mostly hidden. The brittle, attenuated thread of life is liable to be broken by a thousand accidents.

Solomon says : “ Man knoweth not his time ; as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and the birds that are caught in the snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.” The following observations on this passage, by the judicious Dr. Lathrop, are worthy of consideration :—

“ Death often sets his snares in places where we think no danger. He may make our employments, our amusements, our refreshments, our comforts, the nets in which to take us. The air which we breathe may be charged with pestilential quality. The food which we eat may, by means of noxious ingredients, or some peculiar state of the body, operate to our destruction. The blood, which is the life, and which distributes health through the body, may become the vehicle of death. An unseen accident may obstruct the circulation of the blood, the dilatation of the lungs, or some other movement of this complicated machine. Immoderate exertion in our labor, or an unnatural position in our sleep, may derange the system. Images painted on the scene of fancy in sleep, may decoy or affright us to some fatal action. Common occurrences, such as we have met with safety a thousand times, may, under peculiar circumstances, prove disastrous. Death may attend us in our walks, and in our fields ; may follow us to our diversions, or our bed-chambers ; and by a hidden and unexpected stroke finish our course. The earth ; the water ; the air ; the clouds ; cold and heat ; storms and winds ; the fire which warms us ; the houses which shelter us ; the beasts which serve us ; the business which supports us ; the pleasures which amuse us, may, in their various ways, become the means of our death. The pestilence walks in darkness ; we see not its approach ; casualties lie in ambush, and spring upon us unsuspected. Were our senses so acute, or our knowledge so perfect, that we could be apprised of all the dangers that attend us, we should be in continual alarm ; there would be terror on every side ; we could neither lie down in peace, nor go abroad without anxiety. It is a mercy that God hides from us many of our dangers ; else we ~~could~~ neither possess our minds in patience, nor perform our duty with cheerfulness, nor use the gifts of Providence with delight.”

The following appeared in an English print a few months past : “ The Duke of Norfolk issued invitations for a dinner, which was in the first instance put off on account of the death of Lord Cantelupe, one of the invited guests. It was to have taken place yesterday, when it was again postponed in consequence of the death, first of Sir Robert Peel, and next of the Duke of Cambridge, to both of whom the invitations were given. The death of three invited guests for the same dinner party is a striking illustration of the uncertainty of life.” Sir Robert died by sudden casualty — a fall from a horse.

We here, also, just notice the fact, that among the many extraneous causes of sudden and unexpected deaths, we are liable to meet such occurrences as, when coming suddenly upon us, so powerfully excite the passions of fear, anger, joy, as to overpower the feeble earthly frame, and to cause almost instantaneous extinction of mortal life.

The other thing which involves the great uncertainty of our lives, as respects our own knowledge, is, that all the circumstances of them, with the time, place, and manner of our exit, are under the absolute control of an independent and sovereign God. We read concerning man, "His days are determined; the number of his months is with thee, and thou hast appointed him bounds that he cannot pass." Job says: "In the hand of the Lord is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind," and piously resolves, "All the days of my appointed time I will wait till my change come." The devout David acknowledges, "My times are in thy hand." This is indeed one of the great fundamental truths taught in the Scriptures, and is equally the dictate of reason; and it is one of the richest sources of consolation to the pious mind. Hence David made the above declaration, as a truth he could contemplate with great satisfaction; while he says there were those who devised to take away his life, and he could say, "I trusted in thee, O Lord. Thou art my God."

Now God, for wise and good reasons, keeps the knowledge of our times hidden from us. He does it that we may regard and honor him as we ought, agreeably to his incomparable greatness and sovereignty. "Behold, he taketh away; who can hinder him? who will say unto him, what doest thou?" It is our duty to ~~bow~~ with entire submission and confidence to his holy sovereignty, and revere him as Lord of all. He does it, that we may not presume on the one hand, nor be dismayed on the other; but may live by faith and simple trust in him; acknowledge him in all our ways; seek to please him, that we may escape his displeasure and secure his favor and protection; boast not of to-morrow, for we know not what a day may bring forth; be watchful, prayerful, and doing the work of every day as dying creatures; and thus be always prepared for death when God is pleased to summon us before his judgment seat.

IV. The present life of man is characterized as one of labor and sorrow. "The days of our years are three-score years and ten; and if, by reason of strength, they be four-score years,

yet is their strength labor and sorrow : for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." This was spoken, you perceive, with particular reference to the aged ; and it is emphatically true in regard to that period of life ; but it is, also, to some extent, applicable to all ages of human existence. When man sinned, his Creator, in the exercise of boundless pity and mercy, stayed his hand of justice, developed a wonderful scheme of redemption, and restored him to a second state of probation. But infinite wisdom saw it best that it should be disciplinary, or attended with various trials and sufferings, that man might learn by experience the evil, the bitterness of sin, and this might operate as one powerful inducement to justify God, feel his goodness in interposing to save him from eternal ruin, and turn from sin with self-loathing and abhorrence.

He was accordingly turned out of his placid retreat in Eden to roam the wide world, converted to a desert by the frown of heaven, that man might be impelled to hard labor in the cultivation of the soil to obtain subsistence. Hence the train of labors and sorrows that rolled on man, which cannot all be enumerated or named ; toils, fatigues, cares, anxieties, sickness, infirmities, pain, distress, losses, crosses, disappointments, bereavement of near and dear friends, combining to constitute a burden not easily sustained by the frail tenement, which soon becomes worn down and exhausted, and resigns its inhabitant.

One principal source of man's infelicity is the darkened and disordered state of his mind, arising from the depravity of his heart. While tumult, and confusion, and every evil work prevail without, at sight of which the preacher's heart sickened, and he turned away in disgust, saying, " I hated life, because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous to me ; " within discordant passions reign. Who is not conscious in a state of nature of such a state of mind, from misplaced affections, wrong feelings, and tumultuous passions, as to despoil him of true peace, and render his mind too much like the troubled sea, which cannot rest ? To the pious man his errors and sins are his greatest grief, his sorest trial.

But let us not ungratefully overlook the blessings of life, which God is showering down in great variety and abundance, adapted to supply men's wants, to alleviate their distresses, to gratify their desires, to afford satisfaction and delight. With what lively emotion of gratitude does the pious man come before God and say, " How precious are thy thoughts unto me,

O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them they are more in number than the sand; when I awake I am still with thee." And exclaims, "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" Still there is no true rest on earth. This world affords nothing that can satisfy the capacious desires of an immortal mind. Man at his best estate is altogether vanity. The soul, restless and dissatisfied in its narrow confines, launches into futurity and floats along the vast tide of eternity.

But it is to the superannuated especially and peculiarly that labor and sorrow belong. These, in substance, as we have seen, are incident to every period of life; but to the aged they become greatly magnified and press them down near the grave. We are often surprised to see what a change has taken place in the appearance of persons, from the sprightliness of youth and the vigor of manhood, to the decrepitude of age. How much do they resemble shadows moving over the narrow plain of life, just on its verge! Or, as Dr. Watts strikingly expresses their condition:

"And if to eighty we arrive,  
We rather sigh and groan than live."

So enervated and clouded are their corporeal and mental powers that the pleasing objects that formerly gratified the eye, the ear, the taste, or the social, the conversational, the intellectual faculties, have lost much of their charms. Hence the pleasure they derived from books, from conversation, from hearing the gospel, from music, and even from the participation of delicious food and balmy sleep, they can now enjoy but very partially. How striking the language of good old Barzillai, in declining to accept King David's invitation to spend the remnant of his days with him at Jerusalem. "How long have I to live that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem? I am this day four-score years old; and can I discern between good and evil? Can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? Can I hear any more the voice of singing men or singing women? Wherefore, then, should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord, the king. Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and of my mother."

The aged, too, by reason of the general feebleness which they

feel have lost much of their wonted courage and energy. They have not fortitude to endure trials or to perform enterprises. You will know the truth of what I say if you ever arrive at my age, when I tell you the aged often shrink from undertaking an inconsiderable journey, especially if the weather be unpleasant.

Among the burdens that too frequently fall on aged persons, and sometimes not very lightly, is to be dis-esteemed, perhaps despised, and treated roughly, for their unavoidable infirmities. Their memory fails, and they ask the same questions over and over again, and repeat the same stories often ; and, being deaf, it is quite common for them to request to be told again what they did not understand. These things too often meet with impatience and scorn from those who little reflect that they are advancing rapidly towards the same unpleasant condition that needs commiseration and kindness. The aged, generally, have sense enough to perceive it ; and it is one of their sorest trials. Then, again, they are liable to discover foibles, whims, oddities. These are insufferable. Most persons will endure, and even be pleased with childish things in children. But the puerilities of persons in their second childhood they cannot away with. Truly, their strength is labor and sorrow. They of all persons need to possess their souls in patience. Says the Rev. Thomas Williams : "Aged persons ought not to be impatient to leave the world ; nor should they indulge the opinion that they are useless in this life. Nor should any desire to hurry the aged from the present state. They are wonderful monuments of divine power, wisdom, mercy, and faithfulness ; and they are proper objects of special interest and affection for what they have long been in this life, what they must soon be in death, and for what they will be forever. We are apt to turn our affections from the aged to the young ; but the aged have the first and strongest claim. Let none, then, be impatient, unkind, and weary in respect to the aged." Respect for the aged is a pretty sure index of a good moral character ; and vice versa.

Aged persons need to be able to say, with David, "O my soul ! thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord or my stay." Specially do they need humility, meekness, patience, weanedness from the world, heavenly-mindedness. Their departing life resembles the feeble, flickering light of a taper expiring in the socket. While swift revolving time bears them onward beyond the scenes of active life and the enjoyments of earth, a selfish, uncharitable world coldly turns away from them.

“Few,” says one, “ask how they do, or whether they are alive.” And when their feeble strength of labor and sorrow is exhausted, and they fly away, they are uncared for, unhonored, unremembered. Lord, thy favor is life ; thy loving-kindness is better than life. Cast me not off in the time of old age ; forsake me not when my strength faileth. O God, thou hast taught me from my youth ; and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now, also, when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not. Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth ; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever. Into thine hand I commit my spirit : thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.

The subject we have been contemplating presents a wide field for interesting reflections and practical remarks.

1. We ought to feel interested in inquiring into the cause of the unhappy state of man. It is no ordinary, no trifling cause. It is sin ; an evil of vast, untold magnitude. See man, to whom was given by his benevolent Creator, in a certain limited sense, dominion over the world here below, without a home on his native earth. He dwells here only as an outcast. He is but a pilgrim, a sojourner ; his days few and full of evil. If we trace the history of man since his expulsion from paradise for transgression, and his doom to spend his days in labor and sorrow, we shall behold a spectacle of various scenes of calamity, suffering, woe and mortality, sufficient to overwhelm us in astonishment. Thousands of millions have perished shockingly by war. Surely, sin, the cause of all this, and of consequences unspeakably more dreadful, is a greater evil than we have been accustomed to imagine, or can, indeed, comprehend.

But this is not the point of view we may or should take in order to see its greatest malignancy, its most dreadful features, its most destructive tendency. The pious king David got some correct impressions of it when he confessed before God, “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.” It is a principle in opposition to all the perfections, the honor and authority of Jehovah, and consequently the good of the created universe. When the Son of God appeared on earth in a perfectly benevolent and lovely character, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved, it crucified him. We see, then, the cause of man’s life being what it is ; for it naturally fills every heart, reigns in every



neighborhood, and envelops the whole world ; and over it should be uttered by the entire race, with heart-felt grief, what was written in Ezekiel's roll : " Lamentations, and mourning, and woe."

2. We ought to feel no less interested in inquiring whether any method could be adopted, or has been, for the effectual relief of man thus involved in guilt and misery. The heathen world, though most deplorably sunk in ignorance and stupidity, has generally had some knowledge of their degraded and wretched condition, and fearful forebodings of the still greater evils that might come upon them for the demerit of their sins ; and has still more stupidly fled for refuge to the worship of idols, vainly thinking to secure their favor and help by performing for them various cruel rites, as an atonement for its sins and a reward for future happiness. Philosophers, moralists, politicians, and other professed reformers in their several spheres, have attempted to apply a remedy that would dry up the fountain of human woes, and introduce a golden age. These are not without their use, rightly improved. They may ameliorate the condition of human society ; but as being the main thing, or an effectual antidote, they are utterly vain.

Still, blessed be God, man is not left in a state of helplessness and despair. Divine revelation announces a scheme, not the result of human intellect, but conceived in the high court of heaven, and in all respects perfectly answering the great object of man's recovery. None but an infinite mind could discover any. None but an infinite mind could know of or furnish one who could pay the debt due to divine justice, and repair such boundless desolations. If we reflect but for a moment on the disobedience of Adam, and its consequences, followed with an accumulation of sin and misery of myriads and myriads of immortal souls, from generation to generation to the end of time, and then what must be the work of redemption, and what the Author of it must meet and sustain, when he had the full weight of all this mass of sin laid upon him, we must surely be filled with astonishment. The scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary evince his bodily sufferings and mental agonies to be extreme, unparalleled ; such as no created nor all created power could sustain. With great propriety did the centurion, while witnessing the conduct of Christ in the event of his crucifixion, with the attendant circumstances and convulsions of nature, exclaim : " Truly, this was the Son of God." Here is a work wrought

in the moral system, that is calculated to display, in the most brilliant lustre, the perfections, character and greatness of Jehovah, and the vast interest and eternal excellence of moral truth and righteousness, holiness and happiness, which will develop sources for the study of holy beings, and of their admiring gratitude, joy, and praise, world without end. True believers, in assured hope of eternal redemption, may adopt the challenge of the apostle, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Thus being risen, ascended, glorified, and ever living to make intercession, *here is a perfect proof* of the completion, acceptance, and all-sufficiency of his work.

"Redemption! 't was creation more sublime;  
Redemption! 't was the labor of the skies;  
Far more than labor, — it was death in heaven;  
A truth so strange, 't were bold to think it true,  
If not far bolder still to disbelieve."

3. We ought, furthermore, to feel a deep interest in inquiring whether man has a part to perform in the drama of his present short, uncertain existence; and whether it is of such a nature and moment as to require much concern, vigilance, and effort. God does nothing in vain. All creatures were made for some end. Especially are those who are elevated to the ranks of intelligence designed to move in a high sphere of action and usefulness. The perfectly pure spirits around Jehovah's awful throne, though enjoying perfect ease and freedom from toilsome labor, are nevertheless active in serving and glorifying him. They rest not day and night, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." Inaction is incompatible with the nature, dignity, and happiness of intelligent beings. Man, in his primitive state of innocence, was required to be active. Much more now, in his present lost and suffering condition, and having the gospel to improve for his own personal salvation, the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, and the glory of God, is there occasion for his activity, yea, his most strenuous exertions. The strict demands which the gospel makes as conditions of salvation are not arbitrary. They are involved in the nature of the case, as indispensable pre-requisites for participating the immunities and blessedness

of the gospel kingdom. There must be, and it is the design of the economy of grace to effect it, an entire moral renovation of the whole man ; and this must commence in the heart, as the seat of moral action and spiritual life. So long as sin holds its dominion in the hearts of men, (as it does naturally in all,) there must be in them an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God ; and impenitence, insubmission to God, unhappiness. An unreconciled mind, fretting because it cannot trust its faithful Creator, this turmoil of selfish passion — this is death.

But when any become willing to cast themselves upon the arms of sovereign mercy, and are renewed by the Holy Spirit after the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, then, under a feeling sense of the evil of sin, particularly as committed against God, and their own guilt and danger, and a deep impression of the divine goodness and the love of Christ in dying for them, their hard hearts will soften and melt, and the tears of penitential grief will spontaneously flow, and they will, in after life, bring forth fruits meet for repentance. And then, too, evangelical faith will come into exercise. There will be a hearty and full reliance on the atoning merits and righteousness of Christ for pardon and the hope of eternal life ; accompanied with a cordial reception of, delight in, and adherence to, the great and glorious principles taught in the Bible. This returning to God, as the rest of the soul, living to him, and dependence on him for every needful good — this is life.

It should be remembered, however, that the work of restoration is not yet completed. Only a sure foundation is laid in regeneration for advancement in a holy life, and the completion of a character that will at length deliver them from the sufferings and sorrows of sin, and irradiate their souls with light, peace, and joy, while they shine in the bright image of the Eternal, in the celestial city for ever. The noble, divine enterprise, so to speak, of engaging in a Christian or holy life with such hearts as they have, even though new created, in such a world as this, so depraved, with Satan, the god of it, to withstand, is attended with no ordinary difficulties and trials, and requires peculiar exertions, with entire dependence on the grace of God for success.

The pious Mr. Henry says, “ By the sin of Adam we are turned out to work upon the common ; but by the grace of our Lord Jesus we are called to work again in the vineyard.”

There is a vineyard in which every man should work ; the ground-work of which is the heart. Now, in the good cultivation of a vineyard, the noxious productions of the ground, doomed for the sin of man to bear thorns and thistles, which draw nourishment from the vine, are eradicated. So in keeping the vineyard of the heart, there must be maintained a close inspection of it ; and earthly affections, improper desires and motives, sinful passions, pride, prejudice, every false bias and corrupt propensity, must be controlled, and more and more subdued ; and the heart kept with all diligence. There must not be conformity to the maxims and customs of the world. The apostle James declares it to be one mark of a Christian to keep himself unspotted from the world. Where the love of the world gains dominion in the heart, the love of God cannot dwell, and it destroys the soul.

On the other hand, the faithful vine dresser will use his best endeavors to promote the growth of the useful plant. So will the Christian, with respect to the graces implanted in his heart. Gracious affections, holy desires, kind and benevolent dispositions, a humble and meek spirit, a spiritual and devotional temper and frame he will anxiously preserve and promote in growth. And this can be done only by a continuous and faithful application of well adapted means, such as daily reading the sacred Scriptures, meditation, watchfulness and prayer, together with a punctual and earnest attendance on the public ordinances and institutions. The tendency of human nature is to the world ; and one has remarked that, in a world like this, the tendency of spirituality, like water, is downward ; I should rather say, the spiritual principle in the new-born soul inclines *upward* to God and heaven ; but it is retarded in its ascent, its fervor damped, its wings clipped by earthly affections remaining and indulged in the renewed heart. How common is it for persons to profess an unhesitating belief of the immortality of their souls, that they shall live for ever, that the redemption of the soul is precious, that the first great duty pertaining to the present life is to improve the gospel of God's grace for their recovery to obedience and holiness, that God may be glorified through their instrumentality, and they may be prepared to inherit future salvation with eternal glory ; and that, in comparison with this, the pursuit of objects of time and sense, which they know full well will soon be to them as if they had never been, is but vanity ; and yet they will go away from the solemn assembly, the social prayer-

meeting, the death-bed and funeral scenes, and onward press their way; in the same manner they would do if the reverse were true, till death finds these immortal beings making playthings of sand, and carries them away from them all into a land where they shall all be forgotten. Hear Jehovah declaring his parental kindness to his people of old, and then pathetically complaining of their ungrateful conduct towards him: "My people are bent to backsliding from me; though they called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt Him. Hath a nation changed their gods, which yet are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. Be astonished, oh ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." A pious man once said to me: "I enjoy the privilege of attending two or three religious meetings each week, beside those on the Sabbath, and, after all, I do but just keep my head above water." King David, who had such strong faith and confidence in God, such elevated hopes and joys, such ardent thirstings for him and the devotions of his house, yet very sensibly felt the need of quickening grace: "My soul cleaveth unto the dust; quicken thou me according to thy word." Hence the importance of guarding well the door of the heart, to prevent the intrusion of forbidden objects, and the yielding to the indulgence of the smallest deviations from the principles of rectitude in desire or thought. Men are prone to overlook small wanderings of the mind as hardly worth noticing. They say, concerning such, "Is it not a little one?" But little things often grow to what is of vast importance—to settled malice, to angry words, to blows and to murder, or to unconquerable avarice, or to shocking acts of impiety towards God. The little foxes spoil the vines. Little sins, neglected, will become great and unconquerable. We are not aware what a proud, vain, wanton or worldly thought may grow to. It may be the means of piercing the soul through with many sorrows, perhaps of ruining it for ever. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth. "He that will keep his house in good repair must stop every chink as soon as discovered; and he that will keep his heart, must not let a vain thought be long neglected." That which attaches great importance and solemnity to this point is the probability that all thoughts, like particles of matter, are

imperishable, or will always exist. It is evident that all thoughts indulged, that come of moral agency, God records in his book of remembrance, and will hereafter, through the faculty of recollection, bring before the mind, in one vivid view, with all the forgotten incidents of long past years. Oh, how awful is the fact, that the book of judgment is that of our life, in which every idle word is recorded, and will be portrayed before us at once, in all their pristine freshness. What a spectacle ! What a solemn review ! How long shall vain thoughts lodge within us ?

Furthermore, it should ever be borne in mind that the embracing, cherishing, and practically adhering to the principles of integrity and benevolence, as respects intercourse between fellow-beings, is an indispensable part of the Christian character. In the family, the neighborhood, the religious society, the commonwealth, the nation, and the world at large, all persons are sacredly obligated to do that which seemeth to them right, endeavoring with sincerity, in the fear of God, and with supreme regard to his will and glory, to understand what is right, following that which is altogether just, and ever ready to aid objects of charity, always making the precepts of the bible their guide. And it is important habitually to discharge all social obligations and Christian duties, because *practice strengthens* these vital principles and habits of piety, justice and benevolence, even as proper exercise does our corporeal and mental faculties. No one can complete a character, or arrive to that moral state that will warrant him to depend on the *past* to the neglect of *present* duty. As our bodies are nourished with daily food, so must we do our daily duty, and in this way have our souls fed with spiritual food. "Perseverance in effort," says one, "is the kind of faith that I have found to remove mountains. It is not sighing, but running, that wins the race. Active obedience is the evidence of that faith which quenches all the fiery darts of Satan. I have found no remedy for suffering or for distressing thoughts like doing."

While we are inquiring concerning the duty of man in his fallen, suffering condition, we may here take a cursory view of it in regard to afflictions, since they constitute so important a part of his life on earth, and of the means of his probation. Afflictions are in themselves an evil and undesirable, for they involve suffering, which is an evil ; chastening is not joyous but grievous. They are, too, to be dreaded, as proceeding from the dis-

pleasure of a holy and good God against sin. But, under an economy of grace, they are not undesirable ; for they are mercifully designed to reclaim sinners, and to promote the holiness of the heirs of salvation. “The Father of spirits,” says Paul, “chastened us for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.” He makes use of them, in the general, when other outward means have not had their desired effect, and they seem to be the last external means he applies. Sometimes they are sent as destructive judgments on the wicked as a warning against incorrigibility, as in the case of the old world, the cities of the plain, Nineveh and the Assyrian empire, and thousands of instances. And sometimes, too, they are laid heavily on the righteous, and the eminently righteous, to answer some special end,—it may be to show the reality and excellence of true religion, and to what extent it can, through the power of divine grace, comfort and sustain the soul.

Seasons of affliction demand, more than at other times, serious reflection, self-examination and prayer. “In the day of adversity, consider. Is any afflicted ; let him pray.” Persons in the school of affliction, rightly improving it, will learn the folly, absurdity and wickedness of loving the creature more than the Creator ; that while the world has engrossed their affections and attention, it has clouded their mental vision ; that they have been blind to the perfection and glory of God, and deluded with the fascinations of the world, and in extreme danger of losing all that good they are capable of enjoying in the service and favor of God. In order to give one a view of this lamentable fact, a preacher wrote the word *God* on paper, and asked him if he could see it ; oh, yes, was the reply. He then covered it with a piece of gold ; and can you see it now ? O, how much does the world hide from the eye of the mind the beauty and excellence that beam forth from God in his works and word ! “They pass best over the world,” said queen Elizabeth, “who trip over it quickly ; for it is but a bog ; if we stop we sink.”

Afflictions are a good touchstone to show the state of the heart. The children of Israel were kept forty years in a wilderness to discover their hearts, whether they would keep the commandments of God or not. Pharaoh manifested unyielding opposition to the will of heaven. Job’s wife counsels him to curse God and die. O, the desperation and wretchedness of such a mind ! How great and blessed the contrast ! But Job

said, "What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Eli said, when an awful judgment was denounced against him and his house, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good." David devoutly justified God in his afflictions: "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me. Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." Habakkuk expressed his determination, that "although all earthly blessings should be cut off, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Paul said, "I am filled with comfort, I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation. Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Permit me to mention one modern example recorded a few months since: "Died in Salem, Mass., Miss SARAH PURBECK, aged 41. She was a miracle of suffering, endurance and uncomplaining patience. For nineteen years she had spasms of the most violent character, and excruciating to witness. With every movement her bones have started from the sockets, and she has not lain down in her bed during nineteen years. For five years, one of her legs has been bent entirely under her, and the other much so; but during a spasm on Monday night, she became entirely straight, and remained so. During the greatest bodily suffering, her mind has been bright and unclouded. Her language has been that of saints and angels." Adversity, in the general, operates more to the believer's advantage than prosperity. Concerning what earthly object can we in truth say as of religion, "this is my comfort in my affliction?" This accounts for the Christian paradox:

"Come, disappointment, come,  
Though from hope's summit hurled;  
Still rigid nurse, thou art forgiven,  
For thou, severe, wert sent from heaven  
To wean me from the world;  
To turn mine eye  
From vanity,  
And point to scenes of life that never, never die."

IV. We now, in conclusion, group together a few interesting particulars.



As the fiftieth anniversary of my ordination as pastor of the church here occurs this month, and as I have been occasionally with you since my removal, and supplied your pulpit when vacant recently, I have thought it not improper that I should address you on the occasion. I deem it not proper, if practicable, to give full statistics and particulars, which the occasion would require if I had retained my pastorate till the present time. I have been addressing you on topics, I hope, more useful. I add, however, a few things.

I was ordained May 27, 1801, and continued in the pastoral office here thirty-two years lacking about two months, without taking one Sabbath for my private benefit, and with very little interruption by sickness. After dismissal, I supplied vacant churches statedly, not choosing to settle again, nearly ten years.

A notice recently appeared of Dr. Magee, of Elizabethtown, of New Jersey, stating that he had preached his thirtieth ordination anniversary, and that he and his estimable wife had ever lived among that people, and that probably there is not another such instance in all the country. This is the native place of myself and wife, and we ever lived here till after dismissal, excepting the time for acquiring education, exceeding the period, as yet, of Dr. Magee. There was recently published also a note of a church having had three pastors, whose aggregate time amounted to one hundred and twenty years as a remarkable case. My venerable predecessor, the Rev. Stephen Williams, was pastor nearly forty-eight years, and died in that connection. Adding mine to his, will amount to two-thirds of the above named period, a parallel case. I have not mentioned these things from feelings of self-gratulation. No, I feel that I have much more cause to speak of my imperfections and unfaithfulness, and to be humble therefor. Yet, through the undeserved kindness and abundant grace of our God, we were favored with sundry interesting seasons of revival of religion, which brought into the church, at different times, a goodly number of the middle aged heads of families and youth, that proved a great blessing to the church and the cause of Christ. Very precious seasons did we then enjoy. "How sweet the memory still!" We can almost realize them. But they cannot be recalled here. Never should we cease to entertain grateful recollections of God's abounding grace, and praise him while we have our being.

We enjoyed, too, very pleasant reciprocal benefactions. I

bear in grateful remembrance your visits and kindnesses. And I trust you will witness for me that I was liberal in aiding you in the erection of your house of worship, in procuring a bell, in supporting the psalmody of the church, and in every exigency. But I forget myself. I am talking as if the fathers and the mothers were here ; but instead of them, with few exceptions, here are only the children. There is but one left of the men who took part in my settlement, a warm-hearted friend, who is now present.\* Indeed, I can use no other language but that of friendship while I mention something like half a dozen of my elders and coevals, not then in a married state, who linger with me on the shores of mortality, behind the many that have entered the boundless ocean of eternity. And then, passing along among those who occupy different grades on the descending scale, we soon come where my ordination is not remembered. I can reckon up a dozen couples in this place, and no doubt there is a number out of it, whom I have married, both of whom are deceased ; and a still larger number of cases in which one of the parties has died. The church of which I took the pastoral charge, my ordaining council, and the large association of ministers that I united with, are all numbered with the dead. Almost all of the men who achieved the American independence, and those great geniuses who constructed so admirable a government for these confederated States, have gone to the resting place of man. The national presidential chair has been occupied by eleven persons since my ordination, thirteen in the whole, and but three survive. It is a solemn thought that more than an average number of a whole generation, say a generation and a half, of inhabitants on the globe, of course ten or twelve hundred millions of souls, have, within the period we are contemplating, passed from their probation to the judgment.

It will not be forgotten by those who lived in the former part of this period that it was one of much agitation ; and one arose, a mighty warrior, an ambitious aspirant after universal conquest, who, by his military successes, made the kingdoms of Europe to tremble, and filled the world with no small alarm ; and who was suddenly arrested in his mad career and brought down wonderfully ; illustrating the truth that no skill or power of man can succeed against the will of heaven, and the brightest human prospects are liable to the saddest reversal and deepest woe.

\* Mr. Benjamin Lyon.

Among the occurrences of a recent date, worthy to be noticed, and which has much interested the Christian public, is the great and extensive commotion among the European nations, in which they have manifested strong, dissatisfied, and chafed feelings under the restrictions of their rights and liberties, so long imposed on them. The light that has shone upon them by means of the missionary and charitable operations of the times, is no doubt one cause of kindling in their breasts desires for civil and religious liberty; whilst they have not knowledge and virtue enough (which alone must come from Christianity) to secure the possession of the invaluable boon.

Within the fifty years past, nearly all Bible, missionary, tract, education, peace, anti-slavery, temperance, seaman's friend, and other philanthropic societies, have risen up in Christendom to meet the exigencies of the world. "During this period there have been among the heathen 2,000 missionaries; 7,500 assistants; 4,000 churches; 250,000 converts; 3,000 missionary schools; 250,000 children and adults belonging to them; 200 dialects into which the Bible has been translated, and 32,000,000 Bibles distributed over the earth." Thus Christianity and civilization have been extended into regions where, from the birth of time, either solitude or the savage had reigned supreme. Although Christians have done only to a very limited extent what their resources have rendered them able to do, with the blessing of God, yet what a vast influence has been created and put in operation for extending the kingdom of Immanuel! What a foundation is laid for an onward, accumulating, and accelerating progress to the glorious result of the conversion of the world to Christ! The world is evidently tending to a more favorable state for inquiring and listening with solicitude in relation to truth. As a general thing, the confidence of pagan nations in their idols is diminishing, and they are, of course, becoming less intolerant. That system, too, of corrupted Christianity, that mass of idolatry and iniquity, which has so long held such multitudes of human beings in destructive ignorance and bondage, and presented such a bold front to the progress of the gospel, is fast sinking into oblivion. And the man who, in office, claims to be vicar of Christ, the supreme infallible Head of the Church on earth, and whose predecessors in times past have exercised most despotic power even over kings, has recently fled for safety, and been in the condition of an exile. And

although he has again resumed his station, and made some special efforts to strengthen himself and his sinking cause, yet the result, no doubt, will be to provoke that inquiry and discussion which will the more effectually work the overthrow of the system.

On the historic page, it is believed the last half century will be brilliantly marked as a period greatly distinguished for an advance in the arts and sciences, and the discovery of various modes of applying them to practical purposes. The expeditious methods of travelling by land and water, and communication of intelligence as by magic, almost with the rapidity of lightning, will be made subservient to the more rapid propagation of the true religion. Our infant country may honorably claim her full share in the increase of knowledge, improvements, enterprises, and works of benevolence ; and her growth and population have been, without a parallel, truly wonderful. She is distinguished for her revivals of religion ; and already occupies a prominent place in the first rank of nations engaged in the evangelization of the world.

Although the prospect is thus brightening in regard to the approach of the latter day glory, the universal reign of Christ, the prevalence of holiness, peace, joy, salvation ; yet trials await the people of God. The prophecies forewarn us that the last conflict between truth and error, the final conquest of Christ and his church over anti-christian powers, a war which has been waging so many centuries, will be very severe. Hence the soldiers of the cross are required to arm themselves with the panoply of Christian graces, that they may be able to stand in the evil day. Two things are necessary to insure this desirable consummation : the presence and power of the Holy Spirit and the holiness of the church. The energies of the Holy Spirit are essential to give efficacy to means, and to sustain and comfort the children of God ; and holiness in the church to exhibit the beneficent nature, the superior moral excellence, beauty and desirableness of Christianity. That they all may be one is the prayer of Christ for his disciples ; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us ; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. Disinterested benevolence, good-will, kindness even to enemies, is contrary to the natural heart, and evinces Christianity to be incomparably superior to every other scheme of religion ; yea, to be the only true religion. “ When Dr. Duff read to the intelligent Hindoo youth,

for the first time, the precept of our Saviour, 'I say unto you, love your enemies; bless them that curse you;' one of them could not restrain himself from speaking out his feelings, 'O, how beautiful!' For days and weeks he could not cease repeating, '*Love your enemies; bless them that curse you. How beautiful!*' Surely this must be the truth.'"

As we are all fellow-sufferers, companions in labors and sorrows, in consequence of being sinners, there are many opportunities and demands for the exercise of mutual sympathy. To the deeply afflicted, or the desponding Christian, sympathy is above all price. It mingles its sweet tender sensibilities, its soothing, balmy influence with their sorrows, and thus shares and lightens them. Even a smile not unfrequently eases an aching heart, and lights up a corresponding smile on the saddened countenance. On the contrary, what keen poignancy is added to trouble by uncharitable, reproachful, harsh treatment, and even by coldness and indifference. How were the complicated and almost overwhelming afflictions of Job aggravated and embittered by the uncharitable reflections and insinuations of his professed friends. O, let us cultivate with much assiduity, by the grace of God, the noble, heaven-born principle of Christian sympathy, which shall lead us to practise agreeably to the second great command in the divine moral code, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," and to the Christian precepts, "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep," "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

What sympathy should be felt in the breasts of Christians for hundreds of millions of perishing immortals in pagan darkness, and multitudes who are blindly perverting the gospel of salvation; a sympathy which shall prompt them to do vastly more than they have done for their enlightenment and salvation. They might do all that is needful to be done, by the blessing of God, to accomplish an object perhaps the most interesting in the whole universe, in a short time, only let their sympathy be strong enough — be like that of the man who said, "I feel my benevolent sympathies expand, the more they are gratified. Like the circle in water, that, starting from one point, spreads itself over the whole surface; so charity, with me, by God's blessing, though beginning at home, did not stop there. My desires were for myself; then my family and acquaintances came next; then my country; then all human kind."

There is another species of sympathy which it is very important all should understand, and rightly improve, viz., that of communication or influence, or one person so acting on another as to bring him to similar feelings and action. Mankind are very liable to receive impressions from others or to be affected as they are in body and mind; and have, in many instances, been strangely so. We will mention one or two cases of the less remarkable kind. A physician, in London, states "that a gentleman who had constantly witnessed the sufferings of a friend affected with stricture of œsophagus, had so great an impression produced on his nervous system that, after some time, he experienced a difficulty of swallowing, and ultimately died of the spasmodic impediment produced by merely thinking of another's pain. The missionary martyr, Williams, says: "During the launching of a ship, by the natives of Eimeo, an old warrior stood on a little eminence to animate the men at the ropes. His action was most inspiring. There seemed not a fibre of his frame which he did not exert, and, merely from looking at him, I felt as if I were in the very act of pulling." How much may we influence others, or be influenced by them! How solicitous should we be always so to act as that our conduct may have a tendency to produce a salutary influence on others. How important that all persons should be at the place where duty calls, and pull aright in every good cause, and pull with all their ability, and pull together. If they would do so, what comparatively easy work would they make of their labors, and what immense good would they achieve. But alas! how diversified are their opinions, their ways, their efforts, compared with their several abilities. How much is their influence neutralized from the want of unity, of promptness, of fidelity.

While there are multitudes whose lives accord not with the chief end of man, to glorify God and enjoy him, the body of the professed followers of Christ walk too much by sight, and too little by faith. They do not improve the advantages which Divine grace has secured to them, as they should do, in suppressing the selfish principle, and in exemplifying the moral excellence, the benevolence, and just and equal requirements of the gospel; involving themselves thereby, more or less, in perplexities and troubles, and weakening the confidence of others in the Christian faith. Their works, in the cause of truth, righteousness, and benevolence, correspond not with their talents or what their outward circumstances seem to promise.

Creature helps are always uncertain ; and if made the chief ground of dependence will prove disappointing, however bright and promising may be the prospect. On the contrary, evangelical trust in God and reliance on his promises, in the way of duty, of obedience, of honoring him, with a reconciled mind, with a willingness to submit all our interests to his disposal for his own glory, is always safe—it always will be followed with happy results. It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in princes. King Saul appeared nobly at the time of his coronation. He was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upwards ; and the people, with great confidence and expectation, rejoiced and shouted. But his reign was disastrous to Israel, and terminated most awfully. When Samuel was sent to anoint as king one of the sons of Jesse, the Lord, contrary to expectation, designated David, the youngest, a mere youth, keeping the sheep ; but in allusion to the description given of him in the word of God, Henry says : “ he had a very honest look, not stately as Saul’s, but sweet and lovely.” Jehovah assigns the reason for this choice : “ For the Lord seeth not as man seeth : for man looketh on the outward appearance ; but the Lord looketh on the heart.” And David faithfully executed the purpose and will of God, advanced the cause of piety, and did eminent service for the people of Israel.

Let me drop a hint to the friends of religion. Christ told his disciples that they were the light of the world, and resembled a city on a hill, having then in view a beautiful city which has been a conspicuous and important guide to the traveller, fisherman, &c., for such should they be to their fellow-men in a moral point of view. Yes, brethren, having been called by your glorious Lord and Master out of the world, to move in a sublimer sphere, as his representatives, to reflect the bright beams of his religion, take your proper, elevated position, shine bright in his image, exemplify the great principles of his gospel, be ready to every good word and work, show out of a good conversation your works with meekness of wisdom, and endeavor to come up to the full standard of Christian duty and uprightness in every station, relation, and department in social life that you may sustain. In this way of strict adherence to the path of duty, avoid the destructive policy of idolizing any man, or making undue dependence on any earthly object as if essential to your prosperity and happiness ; but let your heart be fixed, trusting

in the Lord, his wisdom, goodness, and power to sustain, relieve, succeed and bless you in all times of the greatest darkness and trial. Thus you will exert a salutary influence, more to be desired, unspeakably more valuable, than the accumulation of the best possessions of earth, and may lead some of your fellow immortals to appreciate the character and privileges of the children of God, and cast in their lot among them. When Christians generally shall thus live, the world will believe in Christianity, and quickly will be ushered in the long predicted epoch of "Millennial happiness, the reign of peace and love."

A few observations will now be added in reference to children and youth, their training and duty. There is a strong sympathy between the body and mind. "Passions may have," says one, "and sometimes do have, as great an influence upon the body as medicine, even to the preservation or extinction of life." Probably, young persons are more susceptible of such influences than others. A young man in the town of Holland, Massachusetts, recently died, who, his obituary notice said, had not been moved an inch for five years, and a number of physicians had been consulted, who agreed that he could not be without causing instant death. No doubt this language is a little hyperbolical, meaning that there had not been the least designed or perceptible ordinary movement of him. The cause of his being in that singular condition was a fright, produced by an imminent exposure to a fall from a precipice that would have killed him instantly. He was saved by means of a small bush. Young persons should learn to guard against sudden and great excitements, and to obtain a knowledge of the best method of regulating and restraining their passions. A writer remarks: "The effect of one object of emotion can be removed only by the mind being directed to another. Thus anger, the fiercest of our passions, is often arrested by a word, a look or a thought, reminding us of some tender and beloved association." Let young persons, indeed any one, when passion is strongly roused, habituate themselves, instantly, for a minute to turn their thoughts to another subject. An ancient philosopher recommended to one the suspension of action until he should repeat the alphabet. Another, commenting on this, recommended in its stead an ejaculatory prayer like this: "Father in heaven, forgive me my trespasses, as I forgive those who trespass against me." This may save persons from much evil, perhaps ruin, in which men become sometimes involved by yielding to the gust of passion, and which a minute's reflection would have prevented.



Small things and first impressions are often the cause of a deep effect on persons during mortal life and to eternity ; and through them on others also. It is said that Bonaparte, when a boy, had a small cannon given him by a friend for a plaything. He might have had by nature a more than common martial spirit ; but it was, no doubt, fostered by this circumstance, which occasioned the destruction of the lives of thousands and hundreds of thousands.

“The imitative faculties of children are so active, and their sympathies so acute, that they unconsciously assume the expression of face which they are accustomed to see. Hence the importance that children be habituated to kindness, beauty and intellect in those with whom they are domesticated. Even their playthings and pictures should be free from depraved meaning and violent expression if we wish them to be lovely, and all the hideous and ugly appearances should be excluded from the nursery. Let noble objects be familiarized to their minds.” Nothing can be more beneficial to young persons, or any body else, than the custom of reading the Bible daily, with prayer. The Hon. Samuel Hubbard, of Boston, lately deceased, who was a gentleman distinguished for talent, erudition, and piety, united with another gentleman to carry a young man through a course of education. The youth selected was not pious. On the day of his entering college, Judge Hubbard wrote him very affectionately, expressing his object and earnest desire was that he would become pious and useful, and a minister of the gospel, and gave him, with other advice, the following : “I beg of you to let no day pass away without earnest secret prayer to God for the pardon of your sins, for a living faith in Christ, and the renewal of your heart by the Holy Spirit, and that you read a portion of the Holy Scriptures every day, with prayer that God will enlighten your understanding and open your heart to receive truth.” He did become pious, a minister, and is now a professor in a theological institution, and refunded the money, given for his education, to his generous benefactors.

The Word of God teaches, illustrates and confirms what reason plainly indicates, namely, that our present state of existence is not suited to fulfil the end of man’s creation, or to elevate to perfection our intellectual and spiritual nature. Here intelligent desire is not satisfied ; the sunshine of truth is only reflected on earth ; there is no perfect day to the soul ; we must live abstractedly, i. e., by faith, not by sight, anticipating the

realities of the invisible, eternal world adapted to fill the soul. To those who are growing into an holy temple in the Lord, the present adds but a stone to the grand erection, the design of which is to occupy the soul's contemplation everlastingly. We are then to view this life as brief, uncertain, labor and sorrow, and but the preparatory dawn of endless duration, on which hang immortal interests.

With how much propriety is evangelical faith, which gives the immortal mind the victory over the world, denominated "precious faith!" "The spirit elevated and sustained by the divine strength of a Christian faith, may walk above the turbulence of this world, in a path of light, brighter and calmer than that which the moonbeam paves upon the waters, and which terminates only in the pure and serene glory of the heavens."

Christian friends! pray for me, that I may have the like precious faith, now I have come so near to that illimitable ocean that is before us all; and I have recently been solemnly and affectingly admonished of this interesting fact in the death of the wife of my youth, which occurred a month ago this day.\* Some of you are in the like predicament, as to age, with myself; and all are passing onward with all the rapidity of swift winged time,

\* She was the daughter of the late Ebenezer Smith, Esq., of this parish. She died on the 18th ultimo, aged 71 years and 5 months. She discharged the duties of the several relations in life which she sustained, with exemplary prudence, economy and industry, though naturally of a tender constitution. Under increasing bodily infirmities, and pains, and pulmonary complaints, which she endured with Christian patience, she calmly descended into the dark valley, attending to concerns in reference to her departure, which was evidently near, with as much composure as to other things; and, when the crisis approached, she requested the family to lay aside unnecessary worldly business, and consecrate the season to prayer, and peacefully fell asleep in Jesus, as we trust, in whom she reposed all her hope of salvation. Her memory is embalmed in the hearts of many.

Our son, Ebenezer Smith Underwood, died November 3, 1839, aged almost 21 years. On an expression he uttered the day previous, Mrs. Sigourney composed the following poetry:—

My God, this world which thou hast made  
Is beautiful and bright;  
A pleasant thing it is to see  
The sun's reviving light,  
And every varied tint that glows  
On blossom, plant, and tree;  
Yet still my soul, rejoicing, turns  
From all these charms to thee.

and will, ere we are aware, plunge into it. O, let us not lose sight of it; but let it be our daily concern to be in readiness for so momentous an event.

As I am addressing you now as I never addressed you before, on account of the solemnity of the occasion; and bid you farewell as I never did before, having something in it as if I were leaving you to step into eternity and see your faces here no more, I have been solicitous to leave with you the best instruction that I could. And now, at the close, I add one word more as my dying counsel. Take up anew the too much neglected book of God, the Bible; reverence and read it with more diligent care than you have ever done; praying earnestly for the aid of the Holy Spirit, that you by it may make discoveries and improvements relative to your moral condition, duties, dangers, and prospects; and that you may run with faith and patience the race that is set before you, looking unto Jesus as the Lord your righteousness and strength, your teacher and exemplar.

I know a youth who, not long ago, made the sorrowful confession: "The propensity to deceive clings to me like a brother." O, beware, my friends, my young friends especially; be on the watch-tower, and endeavor, by the help of the divine word and grace, to banish from your hearts all such troublesome and hateful intruders and enemies to your peace and happiness; and let it be your high purpose, and unwearied, persevering effort, to gain the honorable character for which Nathaniel received from Christ such high commendation: "Behold an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no guile!" Wherever this excellent character is possessed, it has been formed by the application of revealed truth. And in every such case there is a preparation of

The ties of kindred love are dear,  
 Around my breast they twine—  
 The parents' voice—the brother's smile,—  
 And friendship's warmth divine;  
 But to an everlasting love  
 My ardent soul would flee;  
 O, Father! bid the wanderer come,  
 Rejoicing, unto thee.

Cold Jordan's stream is dark and wild,  
 And Death, with tyrant sway,  
 Doth stand upon the crumbling shore,  
 And vex my fainting day.  
 But the Redeemer, strong to save,  
 The victory gives to me;  
 And, therefore, shall my parting soul,  
 Rejoicing, rise to thee.

heart to delight in and profit by the sacred volume ; as may be seen illustrated in the following instance. “ I felt not shame, but joy,” says one, “ when appealed to to decide an argument about the propriety of some pleasurable sin, to hear its advocates exclaim in scorn : ‘ O, the doctor takes his morality from the Bible ! ’ And yet,” says the doctor, “ not a long time has elapsed since I should have been ashamed to have been seen with the Bible in my hand.” Here is one good test of religious character. My dear friends,— can you say, in truth,

“ Holy Bible, book divine.  
Precious treasure, thou art mine ? ”

Then happy are you. But if you do not love the Bible you cannot love God, nor Christ, nor prayer, nor the Sabbath, nor the sanctuary and its worship and ordinances, nor heaven, nor be happy there, nor any where in the universe.











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